

School District of Cameron

700 S. First St.
PO Box 378
Cameron, WI 54822

Non-Profit Organization
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Cameron, WI 54822
Permit No. 28

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**Vote: April 4, 2017
General Election**

Questions or concerns, join
us for upcoming communi-
ty meetings in the Cameron
Middle School Auditorium

February 21 at 7 p.m.

March 20 at 7 p.m.

Cameron Box Holder**April 4 Ballot Question**

Shall the School District of Cameron, Barron County, Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$675,000 for the 2017-2018 school year, by an additional \$250,000 (for a total of \$925,000) for the 2018-2019 school year and to remain at \$925,000 for the 2019-2020 school year, and by an additional \$100,000 (for a total of \$1,025,000) for the 2020-2021 school year and thereafter, for recurring purposes consisting of classroom resources and supplies, classroom technology related expenses, transportation and maintenance expenses, and to maintain adequate staffing levels?

Cameron School District

April 4, 2017 Operating Referendum

Cameron School District passed its last referendum in 2013 for the facility improvements within the District. Discussion was held at that time about including an additional amount of funding for operational purposes, but it was decided that it was not necessary at that time.

For years, Cameron has been one of the lowest spending districts in the area in total expenses per student. **Over the past six years, Cameron spent nearly \$1500 less per student per year as compared to other districts within the conference.** In Barron County alone, Cameron was the lowest spending district in terms of total per pupil expenditures for the 15-16 school year. On average, Cameron spent \$1250 less per pupil than the other Barron County districts.

The fact that our District has operated at an efficient level for many years coupled with the continued financial constraints that have been in place at the state level since 2010 have prompted the need for our District to consider an operational referendum. From 1991 through 2010, revenue limit increases from the state averaged nearly \$225 per student per year. For the past five years, this amount has averaged \$90 per student. **This is a reduction in state funding of 60%.** The State puts potential funding for schools into property tax relief, with the understanding that local residents of school districts will decide through referendum whether to actually increase funding to their local schools. **Since 2012, over 50% of the school districts in the state of Wisconsin have passed excess levy referendums to increase funding.**

Cameron School District provides a high quality education with the lowest cost per pupil in the County. In order to maintain its quality education, the Cameron School Board has determined that it is time to ask residents to increase school funding by raising revenue limits. On April 4, the Cameron School District will be asking the community to raise the revenue limit up to an average of \$915,000 per year for the next five years and for \$1,025,000 for each year

50% of Cameron's certified staff members have a Master's degree and/or National Board Certification.

Research is clear that experienced teachers result in greater student outcomes.

According to the Wisconsin Taxpayer's Alliance (WISTAX), the Cameron School District has been the lowest spending district per student over the past six years among all Central Lakeland Conference school districts.

Central Lakeland Conference Schools spend
\$1447 *more per student*

there after. **While this is a substantial amount of additional funding, it will still place Cameron as one of the lowest spending districts in the area.** It is important to note that the referendum would set a maximum on what the board can levy each year. Thus, if funding is improved at the state level it would allow the board to levy less than the referendum allows.

Staffing in the District accounts for over 75% of the budget and the District has already made substantial staffing cuts that simply can go no further. Supply, equipment and resource budgets are also at a critically low point and further cuts will have a severe impact on our classrooms. Filling staff vacancies in all areas continues to be a struggle for districts across the state as we continue to face fewer and fewer applicants for all positions. Our teaching staff is directly responsible for our student academics and classroom environments. **Quality teachers are the ultimate key in the lives of our children.** Without a referendum, we will be forced to continue to freeze all staff wages and will be unable to add any new positions. As student numbers increase, this will impact our class sizes and ultimately teacher retention. Our average teacher has over sixteen years of teaching experience which ranks 4th among twenty-three area school districts, but our wages remain below average.

Finally, it is important to note that **this need is not a result of increased costs from our new buildings and facilities** as our debt service funding has no impact on our operational budget. In fact, our District has been able to make many cuts to our operational budget as a result of our new facilities.

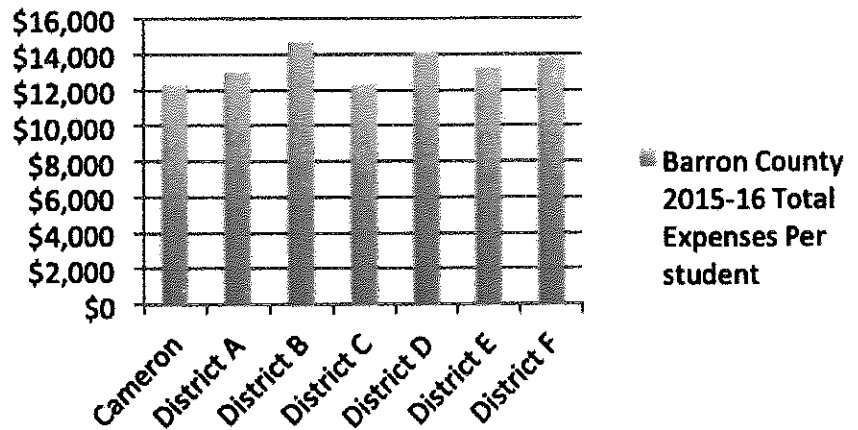
Informational meetings about the upcoming referendum will be held in the Middle School auditorium on Feb. 21 and Mar. 20 at 7:00 p.m. All residents are welcome.

Our school, where staff & students excel ... parents and community care.

Not all school districts in WI are funded equally.

Cameron School District is limited in what it can spend by a revenue cap that has been in place since 1993. When this revenue cap was put in place, spending caps were based on what our District was spending in 1992. Since Cameron was more frugal with spending, our District was placed at a much lower rate than other higher spending districts on this revenue limit formula. In the first year of the state imposed revenue limits, Cameron was \$961.51 below the state average and for the 2015-16 school year, Cameron was \$943.12 below the state average. In essence, our District has been penalized financially for its frugal spending. **If Cameron was closer to the state average on the revenue limit calculation, we would not need to consider an operating referendum.**

Barron County 2015-16 Total Expenses Per student



On average, all other Barron County schools spent over \$1250 more per student than Cameron in 2015-2016.

Our deficit is not a result of our recent building project.

The revenue that funds our recent building projects comes directly from our taxpayers and is not associated with our general operations budget in any way. **This is NOT a situation of our new building facilities draining our operational budget.** The increased revenue from our taxpayers that was approved in 2013 funds the annual payments for this building project. Without the 2013 referendum the tax rates would be lower, but there would be no

direct impact to our operational budget. However, we have realized cost savings in several areas as a result of our new facilities that have helped our operational budget. We have made notable cuts to our maintenance staffing, office staffing and purchased services largely due to our ability to operate more efficiently with the new facilities. **The operational deficit is directly a result of the continued lack of funding from the state of Wisconsin.**

In 2015-16, Cameron's per pupil revenue was \$943 less than the state average.

\$943 x 880 = \$829,840
students in lost revenue

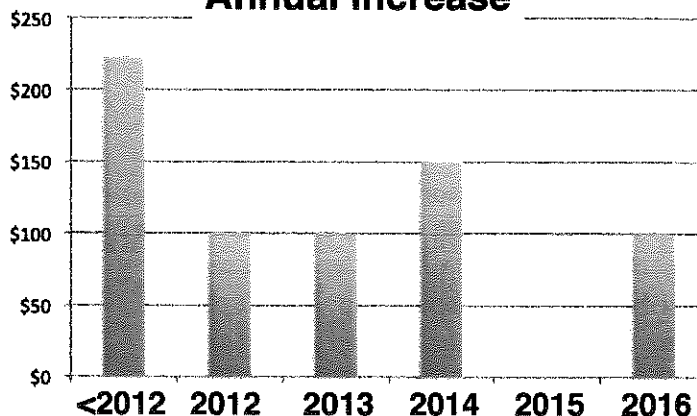
Cameron School District would NOT be facing a deficit if the District's per student spending matched the state average.

Each year the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance publishes a *School Facts* document providing demographic and financial data for all of the public schools across the state. The Wisconsin Taxpayer Alliance is the state's oldest private governmental research organization. WISTAX provides comparisons to our local conference schools and, according to their data, Cameron has been the lowest spending district in total expenditures per student for the past six years in the Central Lakeland Conference. According to this data, Cameron has averaged \$1,447 less in spending per student over this six-year period.

Funding history...

From the year in which revenue limits were imposed in 1993 through the year 2010, the state allowed an average per pupil increase in our revenue limit authority in the amount of \$223.16 per year. **In the last five years, the state has increased our revenue limit authority and per pupil aid by a mere \$90 per year on average.** This average increase has resulted in an annual revenue increase of roughly \$75,000. This is a mere one-half of one percent (.58%) of our District's budget. This is nowhere near adequate to keep up with annual cost increases.

Revenue Limit + Per Pupil Aid Annual Increase



The positive impacts of our open enrollment

Currently, our District enrolls 274 students from other school districts into the District and there are 70 students open enrolled out of Cameron to neighboring schools. This net increase of 204 students for our District brings nearly \$1.4 million into our District for the year. The revenue from our open

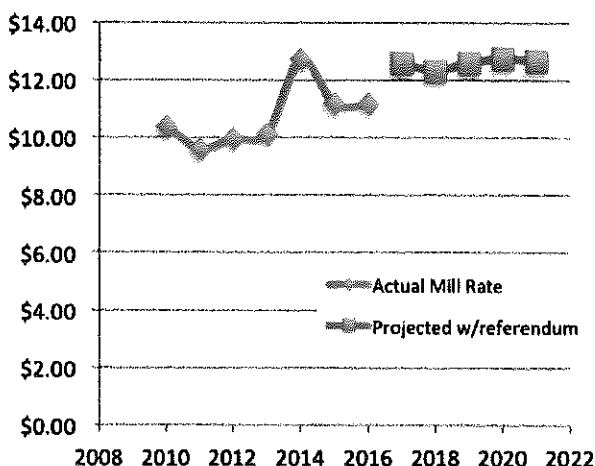
enrolled students covers the cost of staffing needed for these extra students. The extra students that we accept via open enrollment not only help our District to maintain very healthy class sizes, but they also help us to sustain healthy programming from the classrooms to the clubs to the athletic fields.

What is the potential tax impact on an operating referendum?

A tax impact of \$2.05 was estimated heading into the 2013 referendum, so it was anticipated that our adjusted mill rates following that referendum would have been into the \$12.00 range. For the past two

years, we have held our mill rate at \$11.18—a full \$1.00 below where our projections were back in 2013. This is largely due to the fact that the state has frozen per pupil funding on the revenue limit formula. **An operating referendum to address our needs would bring the mill rate estimates into the mid \$12 amounts—only slightly above where they were estimated to be in 2013.**

Mill Rate (per \$1000 valuation)



General notes

In 2015-16, Cameron lost over \$102,000 to the Milwaukee Charter Program and over \$86,000 in 2016-17.

Since 2012 **over 50% WI schools have passed "excess levy" referendums** to provide increased funding for our public schools.